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GOVERNMENT OF CANADA PARTNERS WITH THE KEE-WAY-WIN FIRST NATION ON NEW WATER TREATMENT PLANT

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KEE-WAY-WIN FIRST NATION, ONTARIO (July 24, 2008) - The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, today announced the grand opening of a water treatment plant in the Kee-way-win First Nation.

"This Government is taking action to ensure residents of First Nations communities have the same quality of drinking water as other Canadians," said Minister Strahl. "The new facility in Kee-way-win is a good example of our government's effort to work in partnership with First Nations to reduce the number of high risk water systems on reserve."

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada invested approximately $8.7 million in the new water treatment plant. Kee-way-win First Nation, with the assistance of outside experts, managed the planning, design and construction of the facility, which was commissioned in March 2007. The new plant, which replaces a communal well system, enables the lifting of a drinking water advisory that was in place for nearly four years and removes the system from a high-risk category.

"Water is the lifeline of mother earth," said Kee-way-win First Nation Chief Joseph Meekis. "Clean, safe drinking water is an essential requirement for the health and well-being of our community. It is vital to improving the quality of life for our people, so we are proud of this achievement."

Last April, the Government of Canada announced details of a $330-million, two-year investment in a First Nations Water and Wastewater Action Plan. This included an engineering assessment of First Nations water systems, and doubling the number of people training First Nations water operators. This plan builds on the significant progress that has been made since the Government first launched its Plan of Action in March 2006. Since then, nearly half of 193 First Nations water systems across Canada have been removed from a high-risk category.

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